

## Current and Prospective Transport Connections between Poland's Border Voivodeships and Russia's Kaliningrad Region

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Gumenyuk, I. S., & Studzieniecki, T. (2018). Current and Prospective Transport Connections between Poland's Border Voivodeships and Russia's Kaliningrad Region. *Baltic Region*, 10(2), 114-132. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2018-2-8>

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CURRENT  
AND PROSPECTIVE  
TRANSPORT  
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN  
POLAND'S BORDER  
VOIVODESHIPS  
AND RUSSIA'S  
KALININGRAD REGION

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*Transport is an important tool to support interregional cross-border cooperation. Moreover, transport is a traditional area of cooperation between neighbouring regions. In this study, we analyse the features and configuration of today's transport links between Russian and Polish border regions and examine a range of transport projects aimed at a more diversified and intensive cooperation. We believe that priority should be given to the projects that are beneficial to all the parties. As of the beginning of 2018, Russian — Polish cross-border cooperation was sustained by road, railway, and, to a degree, marine transport links. There is a vast variety of projects aimed to create new transport links between the border regions. These projects differ in timelines, scopes, and the range of resources required. In our opinion, the most promising project in a short-term perspective is the establishment of a waterway connection between Russian and Polish ports. The project includes the seaport terminal in Pionersky in the Kaliningrad region. Another promising project is the launch of a cross-border passenger railway connection using a European gauge.*

**Keywords:** transport connections, cross-border cooperation, Russian-Polish state border, transport projects, transport corridors

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*Submitted on January 15, 2018*

doi: 10.5922/2079-8555-2018-2-8

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## Introduction

Cooperation among regions of neighbouring countries is a multi-aspect and variable phenomenon that involves different sectors. However, there is no single conceptual framework for cross-border cooperation [1]. For each region, cooperation priorities va-



ry depending on its development goals. Social and environmental cooperation among border regions can be more intense and have greater significance for regional development than the nature of political or economic relations. For example, cross-border cooperation within the Russia — China — Mongolia triangle was motivated from the start by the need for joint environmental actions to protect river systems [2]. These collaborations were boosted by initiatives aimed to manage the transboundary Lake Baikal basin [3].

For border regions, which often have limited resources for development, cooperation with a neighbouring state's regions can play a very significant role. In the case of the Kaliningrad region and the contiguous regions of Lithuania and Poland, the activation of the border factor can turn the territory's coastal position into a major benefit. Transport is a tool to strengthen cross-border ties and to increase the role of a coastal position in overall regional development. It can perform two equally significant functions in the context of both regional development and cross-border cooperation. A tool for strengthening cross-border ties, transport is an object of cross-border cooperation, which includes joint transportation projects and the creation of transport and logistics corridors. Providing for passenger and freight traffic across the border, transport defines how economic and social ties develop between the neighbouring territories. Finally, transport is critically important for launching and strengthening interregional cross-border cooperation.

### Problem formulation

Russian-Polish cross-border cooperation is an important factor in the internal development of the Russian region and the bordering Warmian-Masurian and Pomeranian voivodeships of Poland [4], since there are few other development instruments. Despite the complications in the political and economic dialogue between the countries and between Russia and the EU, the history of Russian-Polish border contacts is best described as progressive development [5].

Russia is engaged in cross-border cooperation at national, regional, and local levels. The Agency for International and Interregional Ties is a Kaliningrad regional executive body that provides recommendations for shaping and implementing foreign, interregional, and foreign economic policies in line with national foreign policy targets. Not long ago, cross-border cooperation became possible at the municipal level, i.e. now it can be conducted by municipalities.<sup>1</sup> Until recently, there was a problem

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<sup>1</sup> On the Framework for Cross-Border Cooperation: Federal Law of July 26, 2017. Available through the Consultant Plus system.



relating to the delineation of responsibilities between regional executive bodies and municipalities when organising and conducting cross-border cooperation [6—7]. In Poland, the principal agents of cross-border cooperation are self-government units. The principles of cross-border cooperation are regulated by a law<sup>2</sup> that allows municipalities to join and participate in associations within their powers and competencies and acting under the laws of Poland and in lines with the country's foreign policy and international obligations. A voivodeship enters into cross-border cooperation in accordance with the priorities for voivodeship international collaborations and with procedures stipulated in self-government regulations.

Another important factor is the institutionalisation of cooperation by bilateral commissions of the national and regional level. The Russian-Polish Council on Cooperation between Polish Voivodeships and Russia's Kaliningrad Region is a major body. Acting under the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation of May 22, 1992<sup>3</sup>, the Council plays a crucial role in the organisation of, and support for, cross-border cooperation between Poland's voivodeships and the Kaliningrad region. Institutional, political, and economic factors can either intensify (local border traffic between Russian and Poland [8]) or inhibit (sanctions and countersanctions [9]) cross-border cooperation. Today, similarities in the socioeconomic development on either side of the border prevent the complete termination of cooperation. One set of cross-border cooperation models is replaced by another one, which is adapted to current conditions. This proves that isolated border regions are impossible [10]. Although the intensity of cross-border cooperation between the Kaliningrad region and Poland's border voivodeships is unlikely to change dramatically in a short-term perspective, there is a need to define the role of transport in current and future Russian-Polish cross-border collaborations.

Polish authors maintain [11—13] that the mechanism for local border traffic (LBT) was a success in economic and social terms. Poland benefited from a growth in tourism and trade and Russia — from stronger social contacts [14], an increasing number of joint NGO projects, and closer cooperation of border services in the development of border infrastructure. At the same time, LBT translated into an increased work-

<sup>2</sup> Law of September 15, 2000 on the principles of joining international associations of local and regional communities by units of territorial self-government. URL: <http://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/du/2000/s/91/1009> (accessed 01.11.2017).

<sup>3</sup> The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on Traffic in the Vistula Lagoon (September 1, 2009). URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902178646> (accessed 09.12.2017).



load for the existing border infrastructure [15]. The suspension of LBT alleviated the problem of border crossings. However, on average, checkpoints are working at 1.3 of their capacity. With the resumption of LBT, the capacity of checkpoints will once again become a limitation to the progress of Russian-Polish cross-border cooperation. Alongside plans to develop road checkpoints on either side of the border, there are numerous projects aimed to diversify transport links between the regions, using different types of vehicles. Building on an understanding of the regional trajectory of socioeconomic development, the Kaliningrad region is working on projects to promote transport cooperation with Poland's border voivodeships. Polish projects to enhance transport links with the Kaliningrad region are also driven by national needs to develop the border voivodeships.

### **Methods and the hypothesis**

This work aims to harmonise the Russian and Polish perspectives on the practicality of various transport projects that may be launched in the border regions in the near future. We support the hypothesis that priority should be given to projects beneficial for all partners. Pursuing such transport projects will not only intensify cross-border cooperation but also contribute to the internal socioeconomic development of the border regions. This article analyses earlier proposed transportation projects that can affect Russian-Polish cross-border cooperation and the development of both border regions. A project analysis should include an evaluation of project variants in a short-term (1—3 years), mid-term (5—7 years), and long-term (10—15 years) perspective. The key methods used in this study are analytic comparison, spatial analysis, and critical forecasting.

### **An analysis of the current transport situation at the Russian-Polish border**

Before embarking on an analysis of the projects, we will outline the current condition of transport links between the Kaliningrad region and Poland's border regions. Today, passenger traffic between the border regions is carried exclusively by road. However, during some historical periods, it was carried by rail and waterways too. Due to a wide range of causes — which do not always include a lack of demand from local residents, — rail and waterway transport does contribute to passenger traffic across the Russian-Polish border (table 1). Road and rail cross-border freight traffic is growing whereas the use of maritime and inland waterway transport is sporadic.

Table 1

**The contribution of different modes of transport to freight  
and passenger traffic across the Russian-Polish border**

Mode of transport	Cargo traffic	Passenger traffic
Road	+	+
Rail	+	—
Maritime	+	—
Inland waterway (including cabotage)	+	—
Air	—	—

Source: compiled by the authors.

In 2017, 3.9 m people crossed the Russian-Polish border — 2.5 m from the Kaliningrad region and 1.4 from Poland.<sup>4</sup>

The passenger traffic across the Russian-Polish border is serviced by four road checkpoints, the total capacity of which is 6,700 vehicles per day, including 4,700 cars (table 2).

Table 2

**The design capacity of checkpoints along the Russian-Polish border**

Checkpoint	Total capacity	By type of vehicle		
		Cars	Lorries	Buses
Two-way road check-point Bagrationovsk	1 200	900	200	100
Two-way road check-point Mamonovo	500	450	No data	50
Two-way road check-point Gusev	1000	750	175	75
Two-way road check-point Mamonovo-2	4000	2600	1250	150
<i>Total</i>	<i>6 700</i>	<i>4 700</i>	<i>1625</i>	<i>375</i>

Source: [15].

<sup>4</sup> *Biuletyn* Statystyczny Straży Granicznej za 2017 r. Biuletyn statystyczny opracowany na podstawie baz danych Straży Granicznej. URL: BIULETYN\_STATYSTYCZNY\_STRAZY\_GRANICZNEJ\_ZA\_2017\_ROK.pdf (accessed 09.03.2018).

Russian open sources do not contain information on the actual performance of checkpoints in 2017. Since the Federal Agency for the Development of State Border Infrastructure (Rosgranitsa)<sup>5</sup> was disbanded and its functions were transferred to the Directorate for the Construction and Exploitation of Rosgranitsa Facilities, there is little open source information on the operation of checkpoints. According to a report by Poland's border service, in 2017, the Russian-Polish border was crossed by 2.2 m land vehicles, including 2 m cars. Therefore, the total capacity of checkpoints along the Russian-Polish border is 1.7 m cars per year (4,700 cars per day  $\times$  365 days). In 2017, the checkpoints were working 20% above their capacity. Obviously, checkpoints Mamonovo and Mamonovo 2, which are the closest to the city of Kaliningrad, accommodate most of the cross-border passenger traffic.

As the 2017 data show, the existing checkpoints along the Russian-Polish border are working above their capacity. LBT translated into two million more crossings per year, which required additional transport channels at the Russian-Polish border that could reduce the workload of the existing infrastructure and create competition in the market of cross-border transport operations. Figure 1 and table 3 show a summary of information on projects considered in the article. Below, we will provide a detailed analysis of the projects.

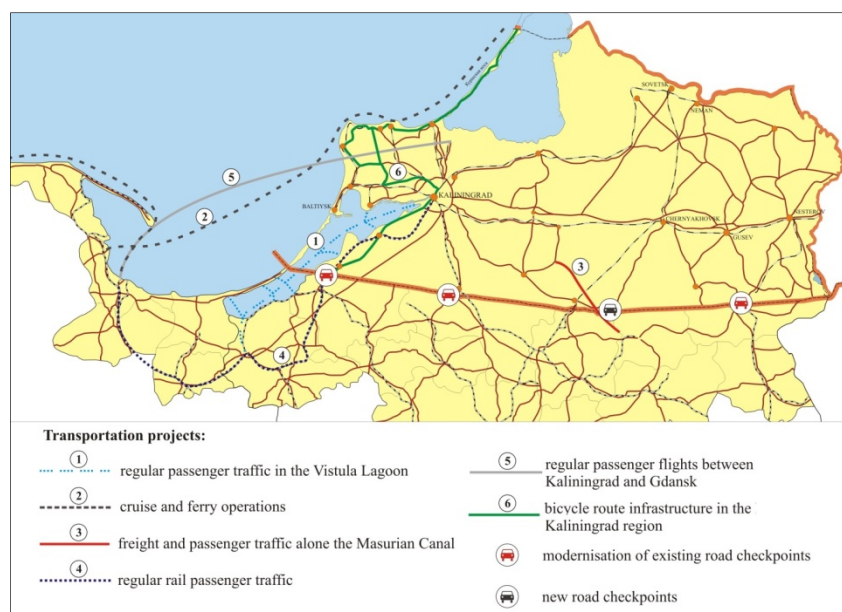


Fig. Transportation projects aimed to expand channels for cooperation between Russia's and Poland's border regions

Source: compiled by the authors.

<sup>5</sup> On the dissolution of the Federal Agency for the Development of State Border Infrastructure: Executive Order of the President of the Russian Federation of February 2, 2016 No. 40. Available through the Consultant Plus system.

Table 3

**Proposed transportation projects aimed to expand channels for cooperation  
between Russia's and Poland's border regions**

Mode of transport	Project title	Project duration		
		1—3 years	5—7 years	10—15 years
Road vehicles	The modernisation of the existing and the construction of new checkpoints along the Russian-Polish border			+
Maritime and inland waterway transport	Regular freight and passenger traffic in the Vistula Lagoon		+	+
Maritime transport	The launch of cruise and ferry operations at the international port of Pionersky	+		
Inland waterway transport	Freight and passenger traffic along the Masurian Canal			+
Rail transport	Regular rail passenger traffic	+	+	
Air	Regular air flights between Kaliningrad and Gdansk		+	
Green transport	Bicycle route infrastructure in the Kaliningrad region			+

Source: compiled by the authors.

### Description of major transportation projects

*1. Modernisation of the existing and the construction of new road checkpoints.*

From the perspective of design capacity and of compliance with current requirements for equipment and infrastructure, only one of the four checkpoints stands out. Checkpoint Mamonovo 2, which has been functioning since 2010, is the Kaliningrad region's most state-of-the-art border facility. The year 2015, when the LBT was not yet suspended, recorded the highest number of border crossings in the history of Russian — Polish cooperation. Various institutions — the Council on Cooperation between the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and the Regions of the Republic of Poland and the Russian-Polish Work Group on Customs Affairs, which was established in the framework of the effec-





tual international Russian-Polish cooperation of customs services, — discussed projects to increase the capacity of the border. The proposals made can be classed into two categories — comprehensive modernisation of the existing checkpoints and the construction of new facilities. The village of Krylovo was considered as a probable construction site. It was planned to use the Poland-Russia cross-border cooperation project for 2014—2020 as a major source of funding. However, in 2018, an increase in checkpoint capacity is not a pressing concern. Although the cross-border cooperation programme adopted at the end of 2017 embeds ‘border security’ as a priority. However, a budget of 5.7 m euros<sup>6</sup> is too low to modernise the existing checkpoints and, all the more so, to create new ones. For example, the construction of checkpoint Mamonovo 2 — Grzechotki, which was commenced in 2006, had a budget of 13 m euros<sup>7</sup> (in 2006 prices). Thus, an increase in the total capacity of road checkpoints along the Russian-Polish border is rather unlikely in a short-term or mid-term perspective because of the absence of either coordinated plans or sources of funding.

## *2. Freight and passenger traffic between Russian and Polish ports in the Vistula Lagoon.*

The national border between Russian and Poland has both land and sea sections. An indivisible object from the physiographical perspective, the Vistula Lagoon is divided by the national border into the Polish and Russian parts. It is possible to organise regular freight and passenger traffic between cities located on the shores of the lagoon, the largest being Russia’s Kaliningrad and Poland’s Elbląg. The traffic can be carried by ferries, barges, motorboats, yachts, etc. In the history of the two countries’ cross-border cooperation, there was a period when traffic in the lagoon was quite heavy. In the mid-1990s, hydrofoil passenger boats were cruising between the Russian ports of Svetly and Kaliningrad and the Polish ports of Elbląg, Frombork, and Krynica Morska. The fuel consumption of such boats was very considerable and the sea link turned out to be economically inefficient. In the same period, barges were carrying coal, grain, and construction materials. The sea link was ended in 2006 on the initiative of Russian federal bodies. The decision was explained by

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<sup>6</sup> The Russia — Poland cross-border cooperation for 2014—2020. URL: <http://www.plru.eu/ru/> (accessed 10.12.2017).

<sup>7</sup> On the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding for TACIS Funding of Design and Construction of the Mamonovo — Grzechotki Border Crossing Post on the Russian-Polish Border: Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 28, 2006. No. 1828-r. Available through the Consultant Plus system.

the absence of a necessary legal status granted by a document of an intergovernmental level [16]. Boat traffic, partly carried by vessels flying the flags of third countries, resumed only in 2009 when a Russian-Polish intergovernmental agreement was concluded.<sup>8</sup> However, freight traffic remains insignificant and regular passenger traffic is absent. The Russian — Polish project ‘VILA — Opportunities and Benefits of Joint Use of the Vistula Lagoon’ and the Lithuania — Poland — Russia ENPI cross-border cooperation project for 2007—2013 contained analyses of the economic-geographical and infrastructural potential for the resumption of regular passenger traffic in the lagoon [17]. A considerable passenger traffic will require special infrastructure, namely, passenger terminals where customs and border checks can be carried out on a regular basis. There is such a terminal at the port of Elbląg. However, the terminal is not used for its intended purpose. The Russian party has a terminal that can be equipped for regular customs checks at the port of Baltiysk. From the economic perspective, a regular passenger line between Baltiysk and Elbląg is not a promising project. To be economically efficient this line should include a passenger terminal in the city of Kaliningrad. The Russian party is considering the construction of such a terminal. However, the project will demand not only a search for the sources of funding but also an approval from federal services responsible for border and customs checks. There is a plan to prepare a relevant feasibility study equipped with an analysis of the cost-effectiveness and social benefits of the whole project. Overall, the project looks promising. If its social benefits and economic feasibility are demonstrated, it can be completed in a very short time through private investment.

Alongside a regular passenger link, the development of a network of smaller ports and harbours in the Kaliningrad region will benefit Russian-Polish cross-border ties. The Russian region is part of European route E70. This circumstance requires the creation of infrastructure and the development of a relevant institutional and legal framework in the Russian exclave. The need to advance inland waterway tourism and expedite the integration of the region’s inland waterways has been discussed by the expert community since tourism was included in the list of the region’s prospective economic specialisations. With the launch of international — including Russian-Polish — projects, several studies were carried out to justify and devise a general coordinated plan for developing infrastructure for inland waterway transport in the Kaliningrad region.<sup>9</sup> However, in

<sup>8</sup> Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on traffic in the Vistula Lagoon (September 1, 2009). URL: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902178646> (accessed 09.12.2017).

<sup>9</sup> The most noteworthy projects include: 1) Maritime Tourism Marketing in the Baltic Sea Region (MariTour) Program INTERREG III B / TACIS project;



terms of infrastructure, these projects are much closer to completion in Poland than there are in Russia. Poland has launched a large project aimed at the infrastructural modernisation and technical equipment of smaller ports and marinas. Partly funded by the EU, the 'Żuławy Loop — The Development of Water Tourism' project was carried out in 2010—2014.<sup>10</sup>

The comprehensive development of inland waterway transport and the construction of necessary infrastructure in the Russian part of the lagoon require that the spatial inefficiency of the border and customs check organisation be overcome. Today, the Russian party checks passengers who have crossed the border using inland waterway transport only in the port of Baltiysk — a city on the shore of the Vistula Lagoon, located at the maximum distance from the border running across the waterbody. Any boat heading to Elbląg from Kaliningrad has first to reach Baltiysk to go through customs checks and then to repeat the procedure in Elbląg. A competitive waterway link means a three-hour journey from Kaliningrad to Elbląg, instead, any vessel has to take a six-hour bypass via Baltiysk — and this estimate does not take into account time necessary to go through border checks. This problem can be solved by establishing a checkpoint at the port of Krasnoflotskoe — part of the town of Mamonovo — the closest point to the border. Such a checkpoint might give a significant boost to cross-border small-craft traffic, since the port is situated very close to the shortest route from Kaliningrad to Elbląg. However, the infrastructure at the port of Krasnoflotskoe needs significant renovation. The port was equipped in the Soviet period as a harbour for fishing boats operating in the lagoon. The equipment of berthes and marinas, as well as relevant onshore services, including those for customs and border checks, requires an investment project worth 50 m roubles.<sup>11</sup> This project has not been included in the list of regional or industry-specific state programmes. Thus, it can be carried out only if supported by a private investor — either independently or as part of public-private partnership.

The effective functioning of water transport can change the current configuration of Russian — Polish cross-border cooperation. Water transport can not only support cooperation through ensuring 3—3.5 m cross-

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2) Project 'Exploiting Inland Waterways in the Baltic Sea Region' Programme INTERREG III B / TACIS; 3) VILA — Opportunities and Benefits of Joint Use of the Vistula Lagoon, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument in the framework of the Lithuania — Poland — Russia Cross-border Cooperation Programme for 2007—2013.

<sup>10</sup> The Żuławy Loop project. URL: <http://www.petlazulawska.pl/index.php> (accessed 15.03.2018).

<sup>11</sup> Investment characteristics of the Mamonovo District of the Kaliningrad Region. URL: <https://mamonovo.gov39.ru/invest/> (accessed 15.03.2018).



sing per year but also become a platform for the development of new cross-border cooperation models. If the potential of the coastal position is unlocked, a shared lagoon and the need for the common use of the waterbody will give rise to transboundary cluster initiatives, including small-vessel building and repair and collaboration to create tourism products using inland waterways, etc. Despite its significant potential, inland water transport does not take part in supporting Russ-Polish cross-border cooperation. The infrastructural and institutional equipment of inland water transport in the Russian part of the lagoon is time-consuming. Thus, cross-border cooperation using water transport is possible only in a mid-term (not earlier than 2020) or even long-term (not earlier than 2025) perspective.

### *3. Cruise and ferry operations from the port of Pionersky.*

The seaport of Pionersky can be engaged in cross-border cooperation between the ports of Poland's border voivodeships and the Kaliningrad region. This will require launching a large infrastructural project in the resort town of Pionersky to construct an international sea terminal that will handle cruise and cargo and passenger vessels. Scheduled for completion in 2020, the project will make it possible to handle cruise liners and ferries. The project is aimed at the construction of not only designated maritime infrastructure but also a passenger terminal where customs and border checks will be carried out and ro-ro ferries handled. Putting the Kaliningrad region on the map of Baltic cruise destinations will open up new prospects for the territory's integration into the existing cruising routes, which include the Polish ports of Gdansk and Gdynia [18]. This will create another transport corridor between the Polish ports and the port of Pionersky. If the cruise industry is capable of generating tourist flows, a ferry service connecting the Tricity with Pionersky will carry regular freight and passenger traffic. The ferry service project is viable. Its implementation will largely depend on whether freight owners and residents of border regions show an interest in it. The cruising route project is a short-term initiative, whereas a ferry service can be launched in a mid-term perspective after demand for such a link in the Kaliningrad region and Poland's border voivodeships is studied in detail.

### *4. Freight and passenger traffic along the Masurian Canal.*

Another inland waterway project aims to generate freight and passenger traffic along an artificial waterway — the Masurian Canal. The engineers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century envisioned the 51-km long waterway as a link between the *Mauersee* (today, Lake Mamry in Poland) and the River Lava. The canal creates a possible waterway link between Chernya-



khovsk or Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea. Commenced in 1908, the construction has never been completed. It was interrupted several times and finally terminated with the establishment of the Russian — Polish border [19]. At the time, the canal was 70—75 % completed. The national border divided the canal into two almost equal parts. The Russian part of the canal is 25.6 km long and it has five locks. The 25.4 km Polish part also has five locks [20].

The Kaliningrad part of the canal is disused, whereas the Polish one is a site for tourist rides and kayaking [21]. However, there are few incentives for the Russian party to develop a new vision of the canal situation. The canal cannot be used in accordance with its initial design — i. e. for carrying freight traffic, since the region has neither necessary infrastructure nor fleet. The reconstruction of the Masurian Canal should be preceded by the organisation of regular inland waterway traffic along the region's major rivers. The Canal cannot be considered as a local freight and passenger link. Neither the Russian nor the Polish part of the canal passes large settlements that can provide a necessary number of passengers or industrial facilities capable of generating substantial cargo traffic. The Masurian Canal can be used only for tourist purposes. However, there are more limitations than opportunities associated with its use. The Kaliningrad region is involved in several other large federal projects, including that run at the port of Pionersky. Local border traffic was suspended. There is no designated infrastructure and the project has insufficient tourism potential. All these will prevent major investors from taking part in this project, which may otherwise contribute significantly to the development of transboundary tourist routes [22].

##### *5. A regular cross-border rail passenger link.*

Of transportation projects in the field of cross-border logistics, the greatest economic and social potential is associated with the creation of a cross-border rail passenger link. Russia and Poland have launched several projects aimed to develop rail freight logistics in recent years. Over the first seven months of 2017, 2.01 m tonnes of freight were carried by rail to and from Poland. The preliminary estimates for 2017 are at 3.0 m tonnes. In 2015, 2.1 tonnes of cargo were transported. Main exports include coal, petroleum products, cement, and containerized cargoes, whereas main imports are containerized cargoes, black metals, and refractories. The range and amount of cargoes carried by rail are affected by both the specifics of local economic development (shipping of coal, petroleum products, black metals and cement) and the ambition to take part in the construction of land freight corridors between China and the EU. The freight corridor projects are run by China, one of them is the Belt



and Road Initiative [23—25]. Both countries are interested in integration into global logistics chains. Both understand the urgency of finding infrastructural and logistics solutions for rail freight traffic. Moreover, there is a pressing need for new alternatives to extremely busy maritime transport corridors [26—27].

Current discussions address not only an increase in cross-border freight traffic but also the resumption of regular passenger traffic between Russian and Polish cities. Until 2013, rail passenger traffic was generated within the Kaliningrad — Berlin route, which passed through Poland. Passenger trains did not run until the beginning of 2018, which was explained by the economic unfeasibility of a rail link. On January 5, the Kaliningrad Railways in collaboration with Polish partners from the neighbouring voivodeships and border and customs services organised trial runs from Kaliningrad to Klaipeda (via Sovetsk) and to Gdansk (via Mamonovo and Braniewo). The train to Lithuania did not have sufficient interest from local residents, whereas tickets to the Polish train had been sold out several days before the trial run.

A rail link between Gdansk and Kaliningrad is expected to witness greater demand in 2018, when Kaliningrad will host World Cup matches. However, Polish voivodeship officials do not believe in sufficient demand from local residents and they are rather sceptical about restoring the rail link [28]. Nevertheless, negotiations between Polish and Russian railway experts are continuing. At the first stage, it is planned to run trains once a week on Saturdays with additional trains during the World Cup matches in the Kaliningrad region.

A boost to the revival of Russian-Polish rail traffic can be boosted by the project aimed to link Berlin, Elblag, Kaliningrad, the Baltic and Saint Petersburg by regular runs of a Talgo train. Set up in 2004, the project is still at its initial stage. However, it has good chances to be completed in a mid-term perspective, since this is in the interest of all the parties to the project, which — collectively — can overcome today's negative geopolitical climate.

Russian-Polish cooperation within railway projects is very active and extends to both freight and passenger links. In a short-term perspective, the existing infrastructure and public support can translate into alternative transport corridors between Kaliningrad and Polish cities. There are promising projects aimed to develop transboundary rail transportation and logistics.

#### *6. Regular flights between Kaliningrad and Gdansk.*

The diversification of transportation corridors between Kaliningrad and Poland's border regions lends an urgency to the launch of regular



flights between Kaliningrad and Gdansk. The Gdansk airport is turning into a major hub that connects the Polish city to many European destinations [29]. Kaliningraders prefer the airport of Gdansk to the hubs of Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Riga when planning trips to Europe. As a rule, Kaliningraders reach the airport by road transport. However, they are ready to use air transport if convenient routes are available at reasonable prices. The route network of LOT — Poland's largest airline — makes it possible to reach Kaliningrad from Gdansk via Warsaw. At a cost of 100 euros, this journey takes 3 hours 20 minutes. The management of the Polish airline has not announced plans for a direct flight to Kaliningrad [30]. At the same time, the administration of the Kaliningrad airport has mentioned that another Polish airline — SprintAir — demonstrates an interest in creating such a route. However, an air link between Kaliningrad and Gdansk cannot compete with the existing routes in either economic or technical terms. According to current estimates, the airline will charge 60—70 euros for a one-way flight. Although there are passengers willing to pay this price to avoid lines at the Russian — Polish border, their number is not sufficient for launching a regular flight. A better economic situation and technical advances, as well as the deteriorating border crossing conditions, may result in the launch of such a link. The flight between Kaliningrad and Warsaw was relaunched in summer 2017. Its economic and public success may become a decisive factor for establishing a regular air link between Kaliningrad and Gdansk in a mid-term perspective. Three-four flights a week between the two cities will account for 25—30 additional crossing of the Russian-Polish border every year. Such a route will not become a major alternative to the existing transport corridors. However, it will contribute to diversification and competition in transport support for Russian — Polish transboundary cooperation.

### *7. Bicycle routes.*

To complete our detailed analysis of projects aimed to develop transport links between Russia and Poland, we must mention plans to create necessary infrastructures for international bicycle routes running through the Kaliningrad region. Technically, there are three such routes — EURO-ROUTE or R1, EuroVelo-10, and EuroVelo-13. In effect, running through the border with Poland (near Mamonovo) to the border with Lithuania (the Curonian Spit), the three routes almost overlap. Most stretches of the route lack necessary infrastructure — bicycle lanes, signs, parking racks, camping sites, or dedicated lanes for border and customs checks. Although some infrastructure elements are appearing in local cities and towns, there is neither a coordinated programme nor sufficient



funding for launching a bicycle infrastructure project. Bicycle routes will not generate stable freight and passenger traffic across the Russian-Polish border. However, they may make a significant contribution to the region's tourism potential and attract international tourists.

## Conclusions

Today, Russian-Polish cross-border cooperation is supported by road (passengers and freight), rail (freight), and, partly, maritime (freight) transport. There are many projects that can diversify and stimulate transport links between Russia's and Poland's border regions. These projects differ in duration and resources needed for their completion. On the one hand, the 2018 World Cup matches held in Kaliningrad are expected to change the configuration of regional transport infrastructure as a result of the reconstruction of the Khrabrovo airport, the construction of new roads, the modernisation of railway infrastructure, and the creation of new port facilities. On the other hand, the status of a host city will make it possible to create new routes that can continue their operations after the World Cup if there is sufficient demand from local communities. The World Cup should contribute to the development of stable and diversified traffic between Russia's and Poland's border regions. Russian-Polish intergovernmental commissions of national and regional levels should play a major role in the development of transport links. These organisations should become platforms where transport initiatives will be discussed and prepared. The sooner such platforms as the Council on Cooperation between the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and the Regions of the Republic of Poland resume their work, the more probable it is that the proposed transportation projects are completed. These Russian-Polish commissions may contribute not only to the development of transport corridors but also to the preparation of a coordinated programme for enhancing the attractiveness of neighbouring border regions among local residents. Kaliningraders are well aware of the tourism benefits of Poland's voivodeships. However, enhancing the attractiveness of the Kaliningrad region among residents of Poland's border territories requires joint efforts from Polish and Russian tour operations and industry organisations. Stronger social and economic ties are a decisive factor in developing transport links between Russia and Poland.

## Acknowledgements

*This study was supported by a grant from the Russian Foundation for Basic Research No. 18-05-00083 'The Coastal Factor in the Competitive Advantage of the Russian Exclave Region: Strategies and Mechanisms for Implementation amid Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Turbulence'.*





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**To cite this article:**

Gumenyuk, I.S., Studzieniecki, T. 2018, Current and Prospective Transport Connections between Poland's Border Voivodeships and Russia's Kaliningrad Region, *Balt. Reg.*, Vol. 10, no. 2, p. 114—132. doi: 10.5922/2079-8555-2018-2-8.